

Waxing Like the Moon: Women Folk Healers in Rural Western Ukraine (1)

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Once a woman came to see me...she says to me, "I can't sleep, and I'm so weak." I asked her, "Did something frighten you?" "No," she said—she didn't want to tell me. I began to pour the wax, I said, "Something has frightened you—either a man, or a dead person." She remained silent. I began to pour the wax a second time, and it splattered all over the house! She says, "I'm feeling better." I said, "Why didn't you tell me? You really were frightened by the dead. Now you'll feel better." Splattered all over the house.

Stepania, 68, village Horykhliady, Ternopil' region

INTRODUCTION

Stepania is a Ukrainian folk healer, known to her fellow villagers as a *babka*, or *babka-sheptukha* ("granny," or "granny-whisperer").(2) *Babky* are elderly women who perform magico-religious rituals such as "the pouring forth of wax" (*vylyvaty visk* sometimes called *strakh vylyvaty*, "to pour fear") to treat a variety of maladies.(3) They are usually respected figures in their communities, and are seen by many to possess a valuable form of wisdom that cannot be learned in books. Though some *babky* are rumored to be witches who practice both "white" and "black" magic, and their practices are derided by some as "superstitions," their fellow villagers usually respect them, seeing them as God's chosen healers.(4) The *babky* see themselves (and are seen by most villagers) in terms of what Faith Wigzell has described as the role of the Russian *znakharki* (knowing ones). Historically, she writes, *znakharki* were folk healers who (in contrast to witches and sorcerers), "did not embody supernatural powers, but acted as mediators with the unclean force" [1998:49].(5)

This article will detail ethnographic data gathered among *babky* in Ternopil' and Ivano-Frankivs'k regions of Ukraine in 1998 and 1999.(6) To carry out this research I participated twice in an annual summer fieldwork expedition undertaken by researchers and students.(7) The annual Dnister expedition was initiated in 1988 by the Lion Society in L'viv to facilitate ecological research on various aspects of the Dnister River and the villages dotting its banks.(8) During the summers of 1998 and 1999, the expedition included hiking and canoeing phases, and lasted from one to two months. Researchers (including ethnographers, linguists, botanists, chemists, and others) camped near villages along the riverbank, spending from one to three days at each campsite.

From mid-July until mid-August 1998, I gathered data on health and healing practices in fourteen villages. During July 1999 I visited seven villages. Additional research for this article was carried out in Zhytomyr region in November 1999. For this project, I interviewed eleven folk practitioners, ten women and one man (see Appendix 1 for a list of *babky* interviewed). The eldest healer interviewed was born in 1914, and the youngest in 1939. All *babky* save one, Eva from Sloboda, Zhytomyr region, were interviewed during the Dnister expeditions. All interviews were audiotaped, and seven were videotaped.

The villages in which the research and interviews took place (included in Appendix 1) were small, ranging in size from fifty to 200 households. The only formalized industries in the villages were small-scale agricultural and livestock-based endeavors, basically vestiges of Soviet-era collective farms. The inhabitants comprised primarily elderly people who grew their own vegetables and raised farm animals (cows, pigs, chicken, ducks, geese and rabbits) for subsistence. As many consultants told me, the villages “grew younger” on weekends, when urban-based children and grandchildren arrived to help their parents with this labor-intensive work. Most households were impoverished, and some villagers reported that they had not seen paper money in several years.

Common institutions in the villages included general stores, schools, “houses of culture,” and libraries. Most villages had an ambulatory, called a *medpunkt*, rather than a full-fledged polyclinic, where basic health services were provided. Some villages had a pharmacy or a kiosk that sold pharmaceuticals. The crisis in post-Soviet health care was evident in all of the villages, where medical personnel did the best they could to provide care despite a dire lack of financing. When I asked the local midwife in the village of Shypivtsi whether the *medpunkt* had a pharmacy, she pulled a shoebox out of her desk drawer. “This is our pharmacy,” she sighed, “People donate their leftover medicine for me to give to other patients.” In this context, it is not surprising that villagers sought strategies for healing outside the sphere of official medicine, turning to local “wise women” such as *babky* for treatment of a variety of maladies.

In the villages I visited, people frequently utilized the services of *babky*. Most *babky* indicated that they had patients every day, and people came from distant villages and cities to seek the services of several of the better-known *babky*. In addition to performing the wax ritual, many *babky* were also skilled in administering herbal remedies, conducting rituals to remove the evil eye, “throwing” (reading) cards, and performing healing massage. While *babky* treated people of any age, they indicated that frequently their patients were young children suffering from “fear sickness,” stuttering, irritability, difficulty sleeping, and similar ailments. For their services the *babky* usually received a small amount of money (2-5 *hryvni*) the Ukrainian currency (singular *hryvnia*, (UAH)) (9) or barter in the form of eggs, sugar, flour, butter, *hrechka* (buckwheat groats) or moonshine.

In cultures all over the world, there are physical and mental illnesses whose etiology and treatment falls outside the official categories of disease recognized by standard allopathic medicine. Many Ukrainians also recognize maladies that are usually considered untreatable by standard Western medical practice. These illnesses are the special domain of the folk healers known as *babky*. The afflictions most commonly treated by the *babky* I interviewed were “fear” (*liak*, or *prystrit*), and the evil eye, sometimes glossed as “curses” or “spoiling” (*uroky*, *porcha*).⁽¹⁰⁾

A belief in the potential ill effects of being the recipient of a certain kind of glance is widespread across cultures [Dundes 1992; Migliore 1983]. In Ukraine as in many other cultures, it is believed that the evil eye (*uroky*, *porcha*) can be cast either intentionally or unintentionally. Fear sickness is common to many folk medical systems, the best-known example probably being *susto* in many Latin American cultures. Fear sickness (*liak*) in Ukrainian villages is usually caused by a scare, such as an accident or the death of a loved one. Children are said to get *liak*, which seems to manifest itself sometimes as panic attacks, when scared by a dog,

when an elder yells at them, when other children taunt them, and so on. *Liak* also referred to phobias about water, dogs, the dark et cetera. The physical symptoms of *uroky* and *liak* are similar, and include “nerves,” depression, weakness, headaches, incessant crying, insomnia, loss of appetite, depression, bed-wetting, speech impediments, mental illness and infertility.

THE WAX RITUAL

The wax ritual usually took place in the *babka*’s kitchen. In summer, it was frequently performed in the summer kitchen, a room for cooking and food preparation separate from the main house. Paraskovia II, from the village Khmeleva, however, indicated that she always conducted the ritual outside, implying that treating a patient indoors could be dangerous.⁽¹¹⁾ Before beginning the ritual, the *babka* discussed the patient’s health complaints with him or her (the patient was usually female). Then she stood either behind or in front of the patient, who was seated in a chair. Frequently the *babka* said comforting words to the patient, such as “Don’t be scared,” or, “Don’t worry, it won’t hurt.” The *babka* then held an enamel bowl of *cold* water over the patient’s head, and began an incantation. She usually made the sign of the cross on the bowl with a knife. Melted wax was poured into the bowl. The wax quickly hardened, forming a sort of pancake. Some *babky* then loosened the hardened wax from the bowl with the knife, turned it over, and interpreted the shapes they saw in the wax.

The wax was usually re-melted and the ritual performed twice more. Some *babky* held the bowl over the patient’s head for all three pourings; others held it over the shoulders for the second pouring, and over the knees and hands for the third. Then the *babky* usually had the patient sip water from the bowl, or wash her face with the water. The water was then discarded in a specific place.

The most important elements of the ritual included water, wax, incantations, and a knife. Most *babky* got the water for the ritual from their well, oftentimes adding a few drops of “holy water.” A priest had blessed this holy water, usually on the eve of the Epiphany. Paraskovia Moroz had asked a priest to bless her well. As a consequence she considered the well water holy, and used it in her healing rituals. Stepania Kuryliak took water from her well, but said that she could only use it if no one had touched the water. Orysia Popovs’ka reported that she took water from a well located beside a local *kaplychka* (small chapel or shrine for prayer), and was careful to do so before sunrise. She crossed herself and said a prayer before collecting the water. If anyone witnessed her taking the water or walking back home, she would discard because it would have lost its “power.” Paraskovia II said that water for the wax ritual should be taken from three different sources early in the morning before sunrise. Most *babky* emphasized that the water should be “fresh,” meaning it should be the first water collected from a source (i.e. a stream, a well) on a given morning.

After the wax had been poured for the last time, the patient was usually told to take three sips of water from three different spots on the bowl. Then the patient was “washed” with the water, for which the *babka* usually used the backs of her hands. Stepania Kuryliak washed her patients’ forehead, chest, hands, and back of the neck while reciting “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” She then sprinkled the patient with the water, repeating this phrase. Anna Novakivs’ka washed her patient’s forehead, cheeks, front of neck, chest, waist, hands, and legs.

The water used in the wax ritual was often discarded by the *babka* in a very specific place, often a location where no human would ever tread. Some indicated that the water should be poured out around a tree. Anna Novakivs'ka said that the water must be poured down the doorframe ("a safe place") after the ritual. The symbolic significance of thresholds such as doors in ritual practice has been noted by Van Gennep [1960:20], Turner [1967] and others. Anna Novakivs'ka said that the water could also be poured out away beneath a tree, something with which most of the *babky* concurred. She told us that women/girls should pour the water out around apple, pear, and cherry trees (all "female" trees), and men/boys should pour it out around oak or ash trees ("male" trees). Paraskovia II said that one should not look at the water while pouring it out, and that the words "Let it return from whence it came" (*nekhai ide tudy, zvidky pryshlo*) should be uttered as the water was discarded. Several *babky* had a special place, such as an obscure ditch, where they frequently discarded the water. Some *babky*, it was reported, gave patients a small jar of water from the bowl to take home and drink by the spoonful from time to time.

The wax was usually originally in the form of church candles that had been blessed by a priest. Paraskovia Moroz emphasized the importance of candles for healing, particularly church candles. She pointed out connections between candles and rituals used to mark the stages of the life cycle (birth, marriage, and death). She also lauded the curative power of smoke from church candles, saying that this smoke "over one's head" and "over one's shoulders" had the power to "disperse all evil." Paraskovia Moroz indicated that a local priest brought her the blessed candles, but other *babky* said they took candles from the church secretly, since the priests forbade them to use blessed church candles in the wax ritual. Some healers indicated that they frequently got their "blessed" wax by collecting the melted wax from used candles from the local church. Mykola Fedorts'o acquired candles from a female acquaintance that worked in the local church. Pavlina Zolota's brother acquired church candles from the village priest and gave them to her. Some *babky* reported that their patients brought them the wax for the ritual, either in the form of church candles or beeswax from a domestic beehive. Tetiana Havron made her own wax candles for the ritual. In general, the *babky* seemed to agree that blessed candle wax was preferable, but that any type of natural beeswax would suffice.

Pavlina Oleksyna reported that she sometimes, though rarely, poured molten lead for patients, a practice more popular in the past. Traditionally, molten lead was considered a more "powerful" medium for the pouring ritual than wax. Earlier, I was told, many villagers would initially ask a *babka* to pour wax, and if they felt no relief from their maladies, they would request that molten lead be poured. Villagers used to acquire lead, a substance in short supply, from various sources such as bullets.

Most, but not all of the *babky* interpreted the shapes formed in the wax (see Appendix 2 for the text of a session with Orysia). A big bump was usually interpreted as "fear," and a wad of squiggly shapes was interpreted as "nerves." A "hole" (*iama*) warned of death, and the shapes of "many people" in the wax foretold an imminent wedding. During one pouring, Maria Orobchuk pointed out that the wax pancake had taken the shape of a bird, with a head, beak and feet. She thus believed that a bird had scared the patient. Typical interpretations had to do with traumas the patient had experienced in the past (a fistfight, death of a loved one, being bitten by a dog, scolded or falling into water), and struggles the patient was currently facing (problems

with documents, health problems, marital troubles). Some *babky* predicted the patient's future. Pavlina Zolota purported to see the patient's "planets" in the wax, and therefore could predict whether or not the patient would live a long life. By the third pouring, the wax pancake was usually nearly smooth, which the *babky* cited as an indication that the patient's maladies had been cured.

Incantations and prayers were central to the wax ritual. The *babky* began the wax ritual by making the sign of the cross over the water-filled bowl and saying "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen," usually three times. Most of the *babky* recited the Lord's Prayer (*Otche Nash*) and the Hail Mary (*Bohoroditse Diva*) or variants of them in the ritual. Paraskovia II used the Lord's Prayer and the fiftieth Psalm. As is common in Slav tradition some of the incantations were not official church prayers, and combined Christian motifs with non-Christian and quasi-Christian elements [Hanchuk 1999: 78] (see Appendix 3 for texts and translations of several incantations). Incantations, also called charms or spells, and in Ukrainian *zahovory*, were not so termed by the *babky* themselves, as they eschewed the negative connotations associated with "casting spells" and "bewitching."¹² Common quasi- or non-Christian elements in the incantations included references to water, certain elements of nature (the moon, water, winds, clouds, rocks, cliffs), particular colors (red, black, white, yellow), and personae such as a "black" simple-haired woman, a woman with three daughters, and a wolf.

In contrast to Hanchuk's Ukrainian informants who performed the wax ritual in Alberta, Canada, most of the *babky* I interviewed did not use "secret" incantations, and they did not purposely mutter them inaudibly during the interviews [Hanchuk 1999:13]. Only one practitioner, Mykola Fedorts'o, declined to recite the secret incantation he used in the wax ritual, which had been passed to him by his mother. Mykola also declined to perform the ritual for us. Paraskovia II also had a secret incantation, given to her by her mother on her deathbed, that she used to cure poisonous snake (*hadiuka*) bites. Paraskovia II feared that the incantation would lose its power if she told it to anyone.

The *babky* all used a kitchen knife in the ritual, crossing the enamel bowl with the knife, sometimes laying the knife over the bowl as they prayed, and using the knife to handle the wax pancake. Though none of them articulated the specific significance of the knife, I suspect it was thought to "sever the fear from the patient," as described by Hanchuk's consultants in Alberta [Hanchuk 1999: 25]. This cutting or severing motif was also manifest in one practice that was unique to Paraskovia II; she required her patients to sit on the handle of an axe during the ritual.

VARIATIONS ON THE WAX RITUAL, AND OTHER HEALING METHODS

While there were recognizable patterns in the performance of the wax ritual, we also found several variations. Paraskovia Moroz, for example, used methods of diagnosis and treatment that differed significantly from those of the other *babky*. Paraskovia, who had been told by priests that it was wrong to melt church candles in the wax ceremony, instead lit a candle while reciting a prayer (see Appendix 3, No. 2), and let the wax drip into the bowl of cold "blessed" water. She then asked the patient to "think something" to himself or herself while she (Paraskovia) snuffed out the candle with her fingers. She watched the resulting smoke, and

said that if the smoke went straight up, the patient would “be helped by God.” If the smoke went in the direction of the doorway, however, Paraskovia said, “*tse ko vrachu*” (you must go to the doctor). Paraskovia then had the patient kiss the cross she wore around her neck, and used the water from the bowl to lightly wash the patient’s hands and feet. She then asked the patient to go pour the water away in a place where no human would tread (for example, in a ditch) while saying, “Let all the evil go to the forest and to the water.” This, said Paraskovia, was so that “the evil would not go to anyone else.”

Anna Novakivs’ka’s methods of wax pouring also diverged from those of most other *babky* in the study. She used only a small amount of heated wax, pouring the wax from a spoon into a little enamel cup filled with cold water. After the wax had hardened, she tore off three small pieces from three different areas on the edge of the flattened wax “pancake.” Then she took one of the patient’s hairs and wrapped it in one of the pieces. She placed the wax with the hair under the enamel cup. Anna then took the wax with the hair, wrapped it in a paper, and set it on fire. She had the patient “smoke” (inhale) it, and made sure the smoke enveloped the patient’s body.

Across cultures and medical systems, it is common that some folk healers boast a wide expertise, while others possess a more narrow specialization. This was certainly true amongst the *babky* I encountered. Paraskovia Moroz, for example, was skilled in a range of practices, including the wax ritual, herbal remedies, massage, therapeutic touch and even controlling the rains. Her expertise was so impressive that friends of mine from L’viv who accompanied me to her home and participated in the interviews began to refer to her afterwards as the “Super-Babka.” Many of the other *babky* specialized in one or two areas, usually the wax ritual and herbal remedies. Paraskovia II indicated that her skills centered primarily on curing snakebites. Because the *babky* often treated with herbs and words, they blurred the boundaries between the roles traditionally assigned to different categories of folk specialists, in this case the *znakhar/znakharka*, whose domain in Western Ukraine has historically been associated with herbal remedies, and the *prymivnyk*, traditionally a specialist in incantations [Hoshko 1987: 273].

Paraskovia Moroz was the most skilled in administering herbal and other natural remedies to patients. We were very surprised to find that she had learned many of her herbal remedies from an 1823 book entitled Green Pharmacy (*Zelena Apteka*), not from her elders in the village. This book, which her grandmother had given to her, had been lost (Paraskovia loaned it to a client who never returned it), but Paraskovia said she knew all the recipes she needed, and stored them in her head. Paraskovia always used herbs that she had braided into wreaths to be blessed by the local Greek Catholic priest on the festival of the “Ninth Thursday,” the ninth Thursday after Easter (Corpus Christi among Roman Catholics).

While I heard stories from villagers about *babky* who were skilled in various types of massage, “manual therapy,” (*manual’na terapiia*, a form of deep muscle massage) and bone setting, only one of the *babky* I met, Paraskovia Moroz, practiced massage. She often used light massage to manipulate the spine to correct pinched nerves and other problems, but her primary specialty was ailments of the stomach. Paraskovia also practiced therapeutic touch, a procedure during which she used prayers and energy to treat the patient without touching him or her.

Almost all of the *babky* had methods for removing the evil eye. Like the pouring of wax, this ritual was usually simultaneously diagnostic and curative. Pavlina Zolota used the following method to diagnose and cure the evil eye. She placed two empty glasses on the table. She first poured some water (from her well) into the first glass. Then she took three spoonfuls of water from the first glass and transferred them to the second, empty glass, while saying “*Ne o dyn, ne dva, ne try*” (Not one, not two, not three). She poured out the water from the first glass. She took three spoonfuls of water from the second glass, transferring the water back to the first (now empty) glass, again saying “*Ne o dyn, ne dva, ne try.*” If after this procedure there was still water in the second glass, said Pavlina, this was an indication that someone had cast the evil eye on the patient.

Orysia Popovs’ka used another method to diagnose and cure the evil eye. She poured “holy water” into a cup, and made the sign of the cross over the cup with a knife while saying “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” She then said the Lord’s Prayer. Then Orysia broke off nine pieces of bread crust and threw them in the water, saying “*Ne dev’iat’, ne visim, ne sim...*” (not nine, not eight, not seven) and so on as she threw in each piece. Matches, she said, could also be used. If using matches, the practitioner should light each match, let it burn, and throw it in the cup when the match was almost burned out. If the crusts or matches sank to the bottom of the cup, Orysia said, the person’s problems had indeed been caused by the evil eye. If, alternatively, the bread or matches floated, some other cause was to blame. If the evil eye was indicated, Orysia used the backs of her hands to “cleanse” the patient with the water from the cup. She used both hands, making a large stroke on the front of the body, top to bottom, and repeating this on the patient’s back. She then discarded the water from the cup in a place where no human would ever tread. Eva used specific incantations to remove the evil eye, and she gave us two versions of this incantation (Nos 3, 4).

Other healing methods used by the *babky* included “fumigation” of the ears by means of an ear candle to release wax and infection. Eva also “rolled eggs” to diagnose and cure “fear” (*liak*), a practice common in Central Ukraine that is in many ways analogous to the wax ritual in the Western regions.⁽¹³⁾ She crossed herself and recited an incantation (No. 5), as she rolled the egg over various parts of the patient’s body — the forehead, chest and arms. She then broke the egg into a glass of water. If the egg exhibited *palochki* (hairs, or little branches/sticks) in an upward direction, and especially if the *palochki* had little “heads” on them, said Eva, the person had been suffering from “fear.” If there were many *palochki* (five or six), she said, this indicated that the person had been scared long ago. If there was only one, the frightening event had happened recently. Like many of the other rituals, the diagnosis was also the cure in the egg ritual. Eva also used incantations to treat maladies such as hernias (No. 6). In one incantation Eva called the hernia a “little gold one,” thus personalizing the malady. She also used kind words to encourage the hernia to “sit on a golden chair, sit down in your place.” The practice of assigning a kind name to a particularly painful or irritating malady is an ancient Slavic practice [Hoshko et al. 1987: 276].

THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RITUALS

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of the wax ritual and other rituals performed by Ukrainian *babky*, it is likely that many of the underlying beliefs and symbols upon which they are based have a

pre-Christian origin. While we cannot know the precise sources of the beliefs and values of the rural population of the East Slavs [Bushkovitch 1992: 212-13], it has been proposed that Ukrainian folk beliefs probably have Indo-European origins and include very little that is specifically Ukrainian [Vovk 1995: 131]. In particular, the idea that physical maladies may be caused by supernatural forces is a common Indo-European belief [Hoshko et al. 1987: 274].

It is widely accepted that “Christian” ideals, rituals, and holidays in Ukraine (as in many cultures) exhibit the influence of pre-Christian beliefs [Voropai 1993: 10]. Religious holidays, it is widely thought, are infused with meanings and motifs originating in pre-Christian beliefs. Indeed, it is possible that in some regards the introduction of Christianity merely resulted in the “Christianization” of Ukrainian folklore, or the substitution of Christian figures for pre-Christian ones [Ryan 1999: 11-12; Tovstukha 1994: 48]. As indicated by Hanchuk, the practice of pouring wax represents a syncretic healing ritual that often fuses Christian and pre-Christian imagery [Hanchuk 1999: 1]. The syncretism of Christian and pre-Christian motifs was evident in many aspects of the *babky*’s practices. In particular, beliefs about the *nechysta syla* (unclean force) and *uroky* (the evil eye) exhibit the influence of pre-Christian beliefs on Christian ideology [Naulko et al. 1993: 243].

References to wells, shores, roots, stones, and the moon in some of the incantations (e.g. No. 1) are likely to be pre-Christian elements in the wax ritual [Vovk 1995: 172-73].(14) Some *babky* mentioned forests, water, animals, ashes and so on in their incantations. One of Paraskovia Moroz’s incantations (No. 2) referred to a “black lady” to whom Paraskovia gave several “tasks,” presumably to keep her busy so she could not cause the patient harm. Paraskovia also called this “lady” *skusa*, a euphemism for *chort* (devil), an all-encompassing representation of the unclean force in many Slavic cultures [Hoshko et al. 1987:250-251].(15) Another incantation (No. 4) referred to a mother and her three daughters, one of whom “turned around” the evil eye. Such references in what otherwise approximated to standard religious prayers would seem to indicate the integration of pre-Christian beliefs into contemporary healing rituals.

The moon held special significance in the beliefs and practices of several *babky*, and some prayers involved invocations to the new moon. Eva told me, for example, that one must follow this procedure to cure a toothache: “When the *molodyk* appears, that is the new (literally, ‘young’) moon, when you can see just a tiny sliver of the moon, then you must stand on a rock and say, ‘*Molodyk, molodyk*, have you been to the other world?’ ‘I have.’ ‘Do people die there?’ ‘They do.’ ‘Do teeth hurt there?’ ‘They don’t.’ ‘Then don’t let ours hurt either.’” Similarly, Paraskovia Moroz told me the following prayer: “Clear moon, young prince, don’t let anyone have them [dry patches from eczema or psoriasis] not Oksana. Take it away, you are young, you see everything at night on the earth.” *Babky* often told patients to time their rituals and prayers to the appearance of the new moon. In some cases, the new moon was seen to have powers to renew a spell, if a particular incantation was repeated with each new moon.

It is common in many cultures, including among the Slavs, for the days of the week to be associated with symbolic significance. Most of the *babky* I interviewed in Western Ukraine designated certain days for treating males or females, and all preferred to pour wax before noon. The designation of days as “male” or “female” and the association of certain times of day with magical powers are probably pre-Christian elements of

the wax ritual. Almost no one performed the wax ceremony on Sundays or church holidays. Taboos against performing rituals and incantations on holidays are found in many cultures. Amongst the *babky*, a reluctance to perform the wax ritual on Sundays and church holidays reflects explicitly Christian influence [Hanchuk 1999: 77]. In some villages, *babky* did not practice on Friday, the day of Christ's death,(16) or on Sunday, the day of His resurrection.

Several *babky* wore amulets to enhance their healing powers, to protect them from the "unclean force" and to prevent transference of the patients' maladies. These amulets were Christian symbols, most often crosses. A Greek Catholic, Paraskovia Moroz wore a rosary around her neck on which were a cross and a small icon of the Virgin Mary. One of Paraskovia's icons included an image of the Ukrainian trident on the reverse side. She also wore a cross-shaped ring pinned to her undergarment, directly over her heart.

The number three and multiples of three, especially nine, were integral elements of the wax ritual. The ritual was usually performed three times. One *babka* performed the wax ritual for patients a total of nine times: three pourings on three different days. Patients were often instructed to take three sips of water from three different spots on the bowl. Many of the incantations, especially "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," were repeated three times, as was the sign of the cross. Several of the incantations (Nos. 2, 4) made references to three events, three people and so on. Three is an extremely important number in Christian ideology (the Trinity), and was traditionally considered holy, being called one of the "signs, given by God" [Boltarovich 1980: 112]. As noted by Ryan [1999: 314], "Three and threefold repetition are universal in folklore and are very common in Russian divination and magic spells." In the *babky*'s rituals, the number three took on a magical significance.

The most important colors in the rituals were red, yellow, and white. Black also figured into some incantations (e.g. No. 2). Several of the incantations referred to "red blood," a "white body," and "yellow bones" (e.g. Nos. 2, 5). As described by Turner [1967: 59-92], red, white, and black form the core of symbolic color systems in many cultures, with red frequently symbolizing blood, white being a symbol of purity, and black having negative connotations. Additionally, in many cultures, red is considered the most powerful color, and is thought to be especially noxious to evil spirits [Hanchuk 1999: 75]. Red cloth was manipulated by several of the *babky* in their rituals. The color white holds both Christian and pre-Christian significance as a symbol of purity, and as an indication of strength. It is therefore fitting that the color white should be associated with the body in a healing ritual. Hanchuk has indicated that, while yellow does not appear to be a significant color in healing rituals in other cultures, it is referred to frequently in Ukrainian healing incantations, being associated with bones in particular [Hanchuk 1999: 75].

Motifs of reversal, using the backs of the hands instead of the palms, counting backwards, and negating numbers,(17) are examples of the use of "sympathetic magic." In these rituals, reversing numbers and body parts is expected to cause a similar reversal of the patient's maladies. The severing of the patient from her fear or illness through the symbolism of the knife (and more rarely, the axe) operates in a similar fashion.

There was a pervasive belief among the *babky* that *uroky* and "fear" could be "caught" (by the healer, especially), and they were thus very careful to manipulate the elements of the rituals in a "safe" manner. The

practice of designating that water be poured out “where no human would tread” is an example. The use of protective amulets also indicates the belief that spoiling is “contagious.” The exorcism of “all fear, nerves, illnesses, unhappiness and insomnia” to the “mountains and cliffs” in one wax ritual incantation (No. 1) is also indicative of this belief. Other *babky* told the evil to go “back from whence it came” (Paraskovia II) or to the “forests and the water” (Paraskovia Moroz).(18)

THE *BABKA*’S ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF HEALING KNOWLEDGE

Across Ukraine and Russia, it has historically been believed by many that folk healers and other “non-simple” or “special” (*neprosti*) persons are born with exceptional spiritual and physical powers [Ivanits 1989: 116]. Traditionally, those deemed “special” have also believed in their own powers. Regional variations also exist; the Hutsuls have traditionally believed that these powers manifest themselves by the time the *znakhar* or other “specialist” is seven years old [Hoshko et al. 1987: 250]. Amongst the *babky* I interviewed, there was little consensus about the origins of their own knowledge and power, or the requisite “qualifications” for becoming a *babka*.(19)

Some consultants believed that *babky* had to be “gifted” in healing, thus affirming the view that one must be born with special powers. Orysia Popovs’ka, for example, characterized the ability to heal using the wax ritual as a “gift from God.” Orysia believed that none of her daughters or granddaughters possessed this gift, and planned to pass on her knowledge to her great-granddaughter, whom she believed would “be capable.” Stepania Kuryliak, in contrast, emphasized that fear was “taken off” by the wax, not by her. This would imply that she did not believe she possessed special healing powers.

In a related vein, several of the *babky* declared that anyone could learn to pour wax. Anna Novakivs’ka said that the ritual would be effective when performed by anyone who believed in God. Indeed, we learned that villagers who were not considered *babky* sometimes performed the wax ritual for their children, relatives and neighbors. While they did not believe that healers were “born” as such, some *babky* did point to specific characteristics that a *babka* must possess. Maria Orobchuk and Tetiana Havron, for example, stated that a potential *babka* must be a “calm” person who is very religious.

Most *babky* indicated that they had learned the wax ritual from an elderly female relative, most often a mother or grandmother. The idea that healing knowledge and power is passed down in families through the generations (often from father to son or from mother to daughter) is a common one across cultures. Amongst the *babky* I interviewed, this transference of knowledge was oftentimes not entirely intentional; Stepania Kuryliak reported that she simply learned by watching her mother and grandmother perform the ritual, thereby “inheriting” both the knowledge and the power to heal. Her deceased mother came to her in a dream in 1996, said Stepania, and chastised her for not pouring wax for her fellow villagers. She then took up the practice, so that she could “help people” (initially, for her own granddaughter, who had fear sickness) as suggested by her mother. Tetiana Havron learned the ritual from her elderly female neighbor, and Maria Orobchuk learned it from a fellow villager who had poured wax for Maria when she was ill. Similarly, Pavlina Oleksyna learned the wax ritual from a woman who had poured molten lead for her daughter. While Paraskovia Moroz believed that

she had been born with the power to heal, she also said that, when she was young, she had performed a procedure recommended by her grandmother to give her healing powers. This included biting several balls of hail in two. This stopped the hail, said Paraskovia, and gave her the power to “heal man and beast.”

The *babky* reported that they obtained their incantations from different sources. Most had been taught incantations by other practitioners. Pavlina Zolota said that incantations came to her in her dreams, and Paraskovia Moroz claimed to hear prayers in the rain. Paraskovia Moroz used prayers from the Bible and other religious texts, and when I asked her to recite a prayer, she sometimes read straight from a book, in order to “make sure she got it right.”

In general, the *babky* said they felt freer to practice their craft since the fall of Soviet rule in Ukraine. Paraskovia Moroz, who was born in 1930, had wanted to study to become a doctor or veterinarian. Her parents, who warned her that all students were forced into the Komsomol (Communist Youth League), dissuaded her. Komsomol members during the turbulent war years in Western Ukraine were oftentimes “tossed into the river,” she reported. Paraskovia said that when she began to heal people in 1964 (she was then thirty four years old) she had to practice in secret. Folk healing was actively repressed by the Soviet regime, and anyone practicing it could have been arrested, she said. When I asked Paraskovia about her experiences under the Soviets, she responded with the following narrative:

I’ve known it since 1964. I was a janitoress in a school. The school director’s wife fell ill with her stomach. It was forbidden then, they’d put you in jail. “Moroza,” he said, “Come, my wife’s ill.” I went and massaged her gently, made a compress, over and over, behind curtains. The director kept it secret; we were hidden behind the curtains. Now he’s retired, he lives in town now, not here in the village. But he comes here to see me, the janitoress! He remembers that I knew all this—and back then it was forbidden to do it openly. Thank God our current school director wasn’t the director then—he [the current director] used to be a doctor [and would not have approved]. But my director said, “Go ahead and do it...” My old granny, she lived to be ninety four. She taught our mother how to treat the stomach. There were four of us sisters. I was born in 1930, the others in ‘32, ‘38, and ‘40. They didn’t care about healing, but I wanted to know everything. They said, “You should study to be a doctor; your hands will help everyone, people and animals. You were born to do it.” I said, “Wasn’t I born like everyone else?” Granny said, “I’m going to die, but you will be useful.”

Earlier Paraskovia had always pleaded with patients to keep her healing a secret, but now she felt free to heal and everyone knew of her abilities. The fact that women like Paraskovia Moroz had protected knowledge of these prayers, rituals, and folk remedies is evidence both of their strong character, and the tenacity of these beliefs and practices.

There was general agreement among the *babky* that the knowledge of the wax ritual should be passed on when the practitioner is dying or no longer intends to practice, and that a *babka* should never go to her grave

without have passed on this knowledge. Several also believed that a *babka* who has passed on her knowledge either no longer has the power to heal, or her powers are weakened [Hanchuk 1999: 9-10]. The perceived necessity of guarding one's secret knowledge, lest the power to heal and help others is lost, is common to many cultures. Though it is reportedly believed by many that a Ukrainian *babka* who reveals her secrets may die soon afterwards [Olena Boriak, personal communication; Hanchuk 1999: 10], none of the *babky* in my study expressed such a belief. Paraskovia Moroz believed that she could "hand over" (*peredaty*) the prayers at any time, but that they would not be effective in another practitioner's hands until after her death. Most *babky* indicated a willingness to teach the wax ritual and other healing practices openly, and used their participation in this study as proof.

I asked each of the *babky* whether or not they intended to teach the wax ritual, prayers and other healing practices to younger people, and most indicated that they did. Most of the *babky* said that they hoped to pass on their knowledge to a female relative, usually a daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter or niece. Tetiana Havron was the only *babka* who indicated that it would be acceptable to teach a boy or man (in this case, her grandson) to perform the wax ritual. Some *babky* had a hierarchical list of possible apprentices, which indicates that they had thought about how and to whom to disseminate these practices. If her daughter declined to learn the wax ritual, Stepania Kuryliak told us, she would, for example, teach her neighbor. During the interviews, curious grandchildren and children of neighbors often observed the *babky*'s rituals and participated in them, usually by fetching instruments and materials.

Some *babky* expressed concern that the younger generation did not seem interested in learning folk medical practices, and that perhaps the tradition of wax pouring would soon die out. This contrasts with reports from Ukrainian scholars who point to a revival of interest in Ukrainian folk traditions amongst the younger generation (Ol'ha Filippova, personal communication). Fearful lest their knowledge die with them, many of the *babky* were happy to be interviewed and most were very willing to be videotaped performing various rituals. This was in marked contrast to Hanchuk's informants in Alberta, who were reticent about being audiotaped or videotaped, very reluctantly shared their incantations, requested that their names not be disclosed, and feared ridicule by educated people who might read about their practices [Hanchuk 1999: 4, 9-10].

ATTITUDES TOWARDS *BABKY*

My investigations showed that villagers often held a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards *babky* and their practices. Many villagers distinguished between folk practitioners who performed "white" (or good) magic and those who performed "black" (or evil) magic. White magic, they told me, was performed with the use of church prayers. Black magic was characterized by its lack of prayer use, and men were often accused of performing black magic and having made a pact with the devil.(20) As noted by Wigzell [1998], Hoshko et al. [1987: 248-249] and Ivanits [1989], the distinction between practitioners of beneficial and harmful magic is historically a fragile one that often breaks down in practice. An aura of awe, and, frequently, suspicion, thus surrounded the *babky*, as has been reported for Hutsul communities in Western Ukraine by Hoshko et al. [1987:250]. Like the Hutsuls described by these ethnographers, in some cases the villagers I met "respected the

znakhary...approached them and other 'non-simple' persons with trepidation, tried not to offend them, not to turn them against oneself, and remembered that one must live with them 'in peace'" [Hoshko et al. 1987:250].

Similarly, many of the *babky* said they were frightened of associating with other *babky*, whom they feared might use black magic. There was accordingly very little communication among *babky* within and between villages. All the *babky* in my study firmly denied using black magic. Almost all were very religious women, and their homes were decorated with pictures of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and other religious symbols. They stressed that they received help from God in their healing practices, and that therefore there was "nothing wrong" with what they were doing. They pointed out that, by reciting "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," and using a variety of prayers, they were evoking God's help in their rituals.

Despite the *babky*'s recognized devotion to God and the church, the village clergy (specifically, the priests) had mixed reactions to the *babky* and their practices.⁽²¹⁾ Many *babky* reported that they kept their healing practices secret from priests, but it is unlikely that they were successful, considering the rapidity with which news traveled around the village. Some priests had suggested to the *babky* that they modify their practices; Paraskovia Moroz, for example, was advised by several local priests not to melt church candles, and she complied by lighting church candles in the ritual instead. Tetiana Havron had been taught by a neighbor to read the cards, but did not practice it after a priest told her that the church forbade card reading. Interestingly, Paraskovia Moroz indicated that she often treated priests (both Greek Catholic and Orthodox) and their families, which would indicate Church acceptance of her practice, at least at the local level. Priests, she said, sought all of her services, including massage, herbal remedies and prayers. I recently learned that Paraskovia has been given the blessing of church officials in Ivano-Frankiv'sk region to conduct her healing practices.

THE BABKA'S ROLE

The contradictory and ambivalent reactions towards *babky* and their healing practices manifested by their fellow villagers, Ukrainian urban dwellers and representatives of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches indicate that there is no uniform role that the *babky* play in contemporary Ukrainian village society. As noted above, the range of special (sometimes secret) knowledge possessed by the *babky*, and their perceived level of expertise, varied widely. Nevertheless, some conclusions may be drawn as to the multiple roles *babky* may fill, and the myriad functions their healing practices serve.

Anthropologists who have studied ritual and shamanism note that, across cultures, ritual practice becomes more prevalent in times of social upheaval [Turner 1967, 1969, 1974]. In the context of a significant decline in living standards, widespread impoverishment, and uncertainty about the future in Ukraine, it is not surprising that villagers (and frequently, urban dwellers) would seek the services of a diviner-healer. As Wigzell [1998: 191] notes for contemporary Russia, fortune-telling (in our case, represented by divinatory practices associated with the wax ritual) "has an important role to play in helping individuals cope with their lives." This insight, I think, can be extended to the entire range of healing practices espoused by *babky* in Ukrainian villages. Coping mechanisms, and, especially, attempts to restore and maintain harmony, are encoded in all the roles fulfilled by the *babky*. In today's trying times, I would argue, Ukrainian *babky* carry out

gendered performances that accord them a measure of prestige and power; complement and replace the system of state medicine; act as psychotherapists; and specialize in psychosocial ailments to simultaneously heal persons and communities. I will consider each of these roles in turn, though it should be noted that, in practice, they are usually simultaneous and inseparable.

This study confirms the observation that in the cultures of the East Slavs, women have tended to dominate in the various domains of “special” people such as healers and fortune-tellers. This is a trend that continues today in these regions [Fishman 1994, cited in Wigzell 1998]. Wigzell [1998: 111] notes the historical association between women and the domestic sphere (where, it should be noted, the healing practices of the *babky* take place), and reminds us that women in East Slavic cultures have traditionally been responsible for kin and community work. Additionally, historically it is also women who have been associated with “intuitive knowledge” [Wigzell 1998: 126]. These are all domains that correlate with folk healing practices in Ukraine, Russia, and elsewhere. In many countries, including Ukraine, knowledge of the uses of various herbs and the techniques of gathering, preserving, preparing and administering herbal remedies has also historically been the special field of women [Hoshko 1987: 273].

It is significant that *babky* are always elderly women, those past the menopause who can no longer bear children. They are revered as “wise women” in their communities, and it is widely thought that “you must wait until you acquire enough wisdom in order to become a *babka*” (Ol’ha Filippova, personal communication). In this they mirror the elderly women curers (“conjurers”) in Serbia studied by Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern [1989]. She notes how “females past reproductive age are seen as asexual,” which gives them an elevation in status and more freedom of movement in a patriarchal society [1989: 115-16]. Kerewsky-Halpern [1989: 132] argues that, in the “person of the kerchiefed village *bajalica* [curer],” we find a “nourishing mothering model.” Her findings correlate with those of other researchers who note that women’s participation in healing, spirit possession and “cults of affliction” provides compensation for their structural subordination to men in patriarchal societies [Lewis 1986, Kendall 1989]. Though the argument should not be overdone, I believe that the important roles filled by the Ukrainian *babka* reflect a source of women’s hidden power in a historically patriarchal society. *Babky*, especially those whose practices are well-known and widely sought out, benefit from their healing roles in multiple ways.

As previously stated, *babky* are generally held in high esteem as “wise women.” They are believed to have special knowledge of prayers and ritual practices, and to possess a unique connection to God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints. The concomitant suspicion that *babky* may also dabble in “black magic” may diminish the esteem with which some villagers regard these women, but also garners them additional respect (out of fear). In general, however, most villagers associate *babky* very positively with pious religious belief and practice. For many, they embody the “nurturing mother figure” described by Kerewsky-Halpern [1989].

In the village of Sloboda, in Zhytomyr region, one young man, Serhii, narrated his experiences with the local *babka*, Eva, in a way that indexed the high esteem in which he held her: “Sometimes it’s so bad for me that my legs just give out, and when *babushka* whispers and prays, I feel better. Maybe that is God helping me?” Clearly, Serhii believed that Eva healed people with God’s approval and help. As Hanchuk [1999: 88] writes of

the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, “there is no doubt that healers who practice the wax ceremony enjoy a very privileged status within the Ukrainian community.” This symbolic capital that *babky* possess becomes a source for economic capital as well [Bourdieu 1986].

As mentioned above, though none of the *babky* I interviewed had an official “charge” for their services, it was customary for patients to give them a few *hryvni* or to pay in barter. This transaction took place without either party acknowledging the “payment:” the patient left behind the money or goods discreetly, usually placing them on a table where the *babka* would be sure to find them. The most well-known healers (especially Paraskovia Moroz) had clients every day, and likely received larger payments. While none of the healers were getting rich from their practice, they did appreciate the extra eggs, flour and small bills. Some of the *babky* indicated that they put all the money they received from their healing into the donation box in the church. This reflects a belief found in many cultures that healing powers are a gift from which one should not make a profit.

While there were clear economic incentives for *babky* to practice their craft, these considerations were not primary. The *babky* I interviewed felt they had a calling to assist their relatives, neighbors, fellow villagers and travelers. In most folk medical systems, health is defined in terms of harmony or balance [O’Connor and Hufford 2001: 19]. In Ukrainian villages, a wise person, and a person uniquely able to restore health in others, is one who can live in harmony with oneself, with nature and the community. The *babka*’s ability to do so, and her willingness to assist others achieve this harmony as well, positions them as important mediators in village communities. As Hanchuk [1999: 88] notes, “They are needed by the community as healers, psychologists and confidants,” and they “propagate a sense of community and social interdependence.” In an historically patriarchal society the role of the *babka* is one that affords women considerable power and prestige. Through techniques designed to restore balance to bruised selves, ailing bodies and troubled socialities, they strive to give their neighbors healing, comfort and hope in the face of a difficult present and an uncertain future.

Indeed, the real and complex healing work that *babky* do should not be discounted. In the context of a collapsed system of Soviet socialized medicine and more than a decade of widespread and often desperate poverty, self-treatment and traditional medicine have become particularly important in Ukraine, especially for rural residents [Phillips n.d.]. *Babky*, whose expertise includes an array of rituals and various herbal treatments, massage, bone-setting and more, are taking up the slack of a failing system of state health care. While many *babky* specialize in treating ailments not recognized by biomedicine (fear, curses and spoiling, for example), many are also skilled in treating problems of the spine, stomach, headaches and others. These are chronic ailments that biomedicine, especially in its current impoverished state in Ukraine, has historically been unable to treat very successfully.

Many of the *babky* I interviewed insisted that they did not wish to compete with the village doctors, *feldshery* (22) and midwives. They usually deferred to local doctors, saying that the doctors “knew much more” about illnesses and healing. Correspondingly, many villagers indicated that they sought the services of the *babky* only after conventional medical treatment had proved unsuccessful. At the same time, some *babky* were proud to report that they had healed individuals whom medical doctors had treated unsuccessfully. Paraskovia Moroz mentioned several doctors who had asked her to teach them her craft of light healing massage, but they

“didn’t have the gift.” Doctors had written down her recipes for herbal medicines, she said, and prescribed them for their patients. In Ukraine, I would argue, *babky* fill a medical niche alternative to, but not necessarily in competition with, official, allopathic, “Western” medicine. Much of the *babky*’s success is likely due to the fact that these folk medical practitioners employ an holistic healing approach that addresses both physical and emotional symptoms of illness.

As noted above, the wax ritual was used primarily to treat maladies that had no analogy in “official,” biomedical (allopathic) understandings of health and illness, and those that were unresponsive to conventional medical treatment. The physical manifestations of fear or *uroky*, nervousness, depression, weakness and others, it was believed, would be alleviated only when rituals were performed to “remove” the fear or curse. The *babky* spent a significant amount of time with their patients, and engaged them in a dialogue about their health complaints. They tried to elicit the patient’s explanations and offered their own suggestions as well. Along with the magico-religious components of the ritual, therefore, *babky* conducted a sort of informal session of psychotherapy. Patients were given the opportunity to discuss their mental and physical state, to talk about family and community relations and problems, and to express their emotions [Hanchuk 1999: 87].

Ievhen Tovstukha, a well-known Ukrainian herbalist, has proposed that the incantations (he calls them “meditative magic words”) uttered by *babky* have the effect of “repairing the central nervous system” [1994: 18]. Indeed, several patients told me that the wax ritual soothed them, and after the ritual they felt sensations of warmth and calm (I experienced this feeling of calmness myself.) The wax ritual included a multitude of cleansing metaphors. Often holy water was used, and the *babky* cleansed the faces (and often other body parts, such as hands, arms and neck) of their patients with this water. Some of the incantations referred to cleansing, as when Pavlina Zolota told the “well of water” (*krynytsia*) to wash and cleanse her patient, or when Parasoviia Moroz asked the saints to make her patient as “pure as the day her mother bore her” (*zdoroven’ku, chysten’ku lyshy, iak ii maty na svit porodyla*).

Many *babky* used the first wax pouring to look into the patient’s past, the second to inquire about the present, and the third to predict the future. Others incorporated all three aspects into one pouring [see Appendix 2]. The wax ritual thus allowed the patient to confront his or her past, reflect on the present and obtain some (usually positive) predictions for the future. Such reflections and revelations involve a type of psychotherapy that may allow the patient to re-connect with disturbing or traumatic events from the past, and to reflect on the possible causes for his or her physical or emotional ailments. Patients were often sent away with a positive message for the future, or with clear directions on procedures to be carried out for further treatment (“Take this jar of water and drink three spoonful a day”).

Additionally, because the etiology of the patient’s misfortunes and ailments were always attributed to forces outside the ill person, jealous neighbors, curses, unclean forces, the patient was absolved of guilt for his or her own suffering. The social origins of the ailments treated by *babky* point to another important function of the wax ritual and the *babky* in general: like shamans in many cultures, *babky* conduct healing rituals that ultimately serve to repair social rifts and maintain harmony in the community [Hanchuk 1999, Myerhoff 1976].

As Galina Lindquist [2001: 21] has noted, “‘folk medicine’ so defined has been called to treat not primarily biomedically defined diseases but a much broader range of social, psychological, and existential afflictions, of which physical ailments [are] only a small part.” As previously discussed, many of the ailments treated by *babky* (nerves, fear sickness, depression) index a troubled sociality. These problems were often linked by patients, *babky*, and their co-villagers to troubled relations; they were caused by intentional and unintentional “curses,” envy, and so on. Fights within families or the community could also produce fear sickness and other maladies.

During our interview, for example, Stepania Kuryliak poured wax for a teenager from Kyiv. When interpreting the shapes in the wax after the second pouring she asked him, “Do you have a mother and father? Either your mother has scolded you, or your father; there’s some fear here.” She remarked after the third pouring, “It is showing a dog, and some people. Maybe he was in a fight with some kids. His mother yelled at him.” Similarly, after Paraskovia Moroz treated Khrystyna, a university student from L’viv, with therapeutic touch, she (Paraskovia) told us what she had felt:

I take this hand, and on this side [your front] I feel that you are gentle, towards people, God, your colleagues. But on this side [your back], people envy you, there’s a cold thread all the way down. Maybe they have good intentions, maybe your relatives say, “Our little daughter, how good she is.” Maybe that’s what they think. I can feel who you are from this side, and...from the other side [what people think about you].

Clearly, the *babky* address not only personal ailments (in their various emotional and physical manifestations), but also strive to restore bruised socialities. By encouraging patients to ponder possible spoiled relations (with parents, friends, relatives, and others), the *babky*, like shamans all over the world, do important psychosocial work in their communities. Because these are small communities where news travels very quickly, villagers often know which persons have visited a *babka* recently, and for what purpose. Through this form of folk healing (as in forms practiced in other cultures), private problems are submitted to public scrutiny [Farmer 1988]. While, on the one hand, this type of public scrutiny can serve as a mechanism of social control [Foucault 1980], it can also facilitate healing at the level of the individual body and the social body [Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987]. This is especially true in societies such as Ukraine, where conceptions of personhood are very sociocentric [Taylor 1985]. In a very real sense, Ukrainian *babky* fill a role as healers, not only of bodies and psyches, but of troubled communities in a time of social upheaval.

NOTES

1 A previous version of this article appeared as “Voskovi formy: *Babky-sheptukhy*, ikhne remeslo ta rol’ v ukrains’kii sil’s’kii hromadi” (Shapes in the wax: *Babky-sheptukhy*, their craft and role in Ukrainian village society), in Valentyn Stetsiuk (ed.), *Kulturni hrona Dnistra* (Cultural Chronicles of the Dnister). Ivano-

Frankivs'k: Lileia, 2001, pp. 55-69. An ethnographic video based on this research, Shapes in the Wax: Tradition and Faith among Folk Medicine Practitioners in Rural Ukraine (producers Sarah D. Phillips and Timothy D. Miller) is in production and is scheduled for release in April 2004. I am grateful to Faith Wigzell and anonymous readers at Folklorica whose insightful comments helped me reorganize this paper and strengthen many of the arguments. I am indebted to Michael Naydan for his generous assistance in transliterating and translating the Ukrainian.

2 *Babky* are also frequently referred to as *vorozhky* (fortunetellers), or *znakharky* (knowing ones), terms used widely throughout Russia and Ukraine.

3 Men also practice this type of folk medicine, though rarely. My study included only one male healer.

4 See Kononenko [1998] for a detailed treatment of witchcraft beliefs and stories in early nineteenth-century and modern Ukraine. Vovk discusses beliefs connected with witches in earlier times, and postulates that these beliefs may have come to Ukraine and Poland from Germany [1995: 179-80].

5 Wigzell [1998: 49] notes the parallels between this role of the *znakharka* and that of the “cunning folk” of England or the counter-sorcerers of France. Ivanits [1989: 122] has suggested that in Russia (and, presumably, amongst the East Slavs in general) “magic healing and sorcery represent two lines going back to the ancient *volkhv*, whose function, evidently, was both to cure and to make contact with the supernatural for purposes of ensuring a good harvest and predicting the future...By the nineteenth [century], folk notions tended to separate the two categories into good *versus* evil practitioners, though at times these distinctions broke down. The basis of separation was largely the role of the devil: peasants often claimed that sorcerers and witches received their special powers from the devil and functioned with the assistance of the unclean force, whereas magic healers supposedly functioned with the aid of God and the saints.”

6 Research for this article was supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the US Department of State and the US Information Agency. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed. Research in Ukraine was also supported by a US Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship.

7 My research on folk healing was one of three major research projects I undertook in Ukraine over two years, 1998 and 1999. The other projects focused on post-Chernobyl health and alternative healing therapies in Ukraine [Phillips 2002b] and women's roles in post-Soviet civil society building [Phillips 2000, 2002a].

8 I am grateful to the Ukrainian colleagues and friends who assisted me in my Dnister research, especially Ol'ha Alekseeva, Volodymyr Bakus, Khrystyna Hnatyshak, Ihor Kokotyn', Marianna Podoliak, Sviatoslav Poteenko, Oleksandr Savytskyi and Valentyn Stetsiuk. During 1998 and 1999, I was the only foreigner participating in the Dnister expedition. In previous years, researchers from Poland and Germany had also taken part. Several publications have resulted from the annual Dnister expeditions, including volumes edited by Valentyn Stetsiuk [1996, 2001] and Mykola Zharkyykh [1998].

9 At the time of the research, five hryvni was roughly equivalent to \$1.

- 10 Ryan notes that, while *porcha* is often the effect of the evil eye, it “can also be the result of any kind of malefic magic” [1999: 33].
- 11 As discussed by Kononenko [1998: 76-77], in Ukrainian folk cosmology, Paraskovia, “a patron saint of women and women’s work, particularly spinning and weaving...is likely an evolution from a pagan goddess.” Moreover, Paraskovia was a saint considered by Ukrainians as “unclean” and connected to supernatural powers. I heard of no such discussions in connection to the two Paraskovias in my study, and I only learned of these historic folk beliefs after I had completed the research.
- 12 See Ryan 1999, especially Chapter 7, for a detailed consideration of incantations.
- 13 See Ivanits [1989: 115-16] for a detailed description of an egg ritual performed in 1926 in the Nizhnii Novgorod district of Russia for the Soviet ethnographer N. A. Nikitina.
- 14 The historical significance of the moon and other celestial bodies in Ukrainian folklore is explored in Vovk [1995: 172-73].
- 15 Hoshko et al. [1987: 251] note that words such as *skusa*, *pekun* and others, have historically been used by Hutsuls (and presumably, other Ukrainian and Slavic peoples) to avoid pronouncing the taboo word *chort*. Vovk [1995: 182] notes that in Ukrainian folklore devils (*chorta*) are frequently described as being “black” and “hairy,” like Paraskovia’s “black lady with long hair.”
- 16 Wigzell [1998: 56-57] notes that Friday appears to have been considered an inauspicious day in pre-Christian times as well.
- 17 See Ryan [1999] for a detailed analysis of the significance of particular numbers in Russian magic and divination beliefs.
- 18 Hoshko et al. [1987: 248-49] describe the *hradivnyky*, people who, among Hutsuls, “possessed the power to turn back hail, stop the storm clouds, or to direct them to a safe place—the water, or the forests.” *Hradivnyky* were categorized as “exceptional” people whose expertise was used for good.
- 19 See Tovstukha [1994: 47] for descriptions of the ideal *babky*’ *vorozhbytky-sheptukhi*.
- 20 I was unable to locate any of these so-called “grandfathers” (*dedushki*) in the villages. It is possible that these “warlocks” are a kind of mythological foil against which the *babky* are contrasted as good healers who work “with God.”
- 21 Unfortunately, I was unable to interview any members of the clergy. The information concerning priests’ attitudes towards *babky* comes from the *babky* themselves.
- 22 A *feldsher* is a medical worker with a mid-level education, whose expertise falls roughly between that of a nurse and a physician.

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Appendix 1: List of *Babky* Interviewed

Eva [surname unknown] (b. 1928); Sloboda, Ovruts'kyi raion, Zhytomyr oblast'

(interviewed 10/15/98)

Mykola Fedorts'o (b. 1914); Dolyna, Tlumats'kyi raion, Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast' (7/20/99)

Tetiana Havron (b. 1922); Berem'iany, Buchats'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/27/99)

Stepania Kuryliak (b. 1931); Horyhliady, Monastyr'skyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/20/99)

Paraskovia Moroz (b. 1930); Rakovets', Horodenkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (8/8/98)

Anna Novakivs'ka (b. 1924); Isakiv, Tlumats'kyi raion, Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast' (7/23/99)

Pavlina Oleksyna (b. 1920); Odaiv, Tlumats'kyi raion, Ivano-Frankivs'k oblast' (7/19/99)

Maria Orobchuk (b. 1939); Berem'iany, Buchats'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/28/99)

Paraskovia [surname unknown; referred to here as Paraskovia II] (b. 1919); Khmeleva,

Zalishchyts'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (8/11/98)

Orysia Popovs'ka (b. 1936); Uhryn, Chortkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/20/98)

Pavlina Zolota (b. 1926); Shypivtsi, Chortkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast' (7/27/98)

Appendix 2: A Healing Session with Orysia Popovs'ka

Personae

Orysia Popovs'ka: folk healer, born 1936.

Sarah Phillips: Ethnographer and patient.

Ol'ha Alekseeva: Expedition participant, chemist from Kyiv.

Setting:

July 29, 1998, Orysia's summer kitchen in the village of Uhryn, Chortkivs'kyi raion, Ternopil' oblast'.

Sarah: What are you going to do?

Orysia: I'm heating the wax, so I can pour it [into the bowl] over your head. Your nervous system has been upset. You've been upset very recently.

Ol'ha: Her mother died.

Orysia: Was that long ago?

Sarah: Seven years ago.

Orysia: And no one poured wax for you?

Sarah: No, never.

Orysia: Don't you worry. [Prepares to pour wax.] It won't hurt, everything will be fine. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen (repeats three times).

[Recites the entire Lord's Prayer]: Our Father, which art in Heaven...deliver us from evil, Amen. [Recites the first half of the Hail Mary]: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. For you bore the Savior of our souls. Guardian Angel! Help! In the early morning, in the evening, in the day, and at night. Keep [her] from evil and fear and from all misfortune. Mother, holy Virgin Mary! Hear my request; grant her health and many, many years of life. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen (repeats three times).

That's it, I didn't do anything [painful].

Sarah: Yes, I heard everything, but I couldn't see it. Was that a prayer?

Orysia: Yes, it is the Lord's Prayer (*Otche Nash*) and the Hail Mary (*Bohoroditse Diva*). I saw it in the wax, that you were "nervous" (*perenervuvalasia*) recently.

Sarah: And what will you do now?

Orysia: ...I want to let it [the wax pancake] cool a bit. Now we'll see what's on the other side.

Sarah: Can you tell the future?

Orysia: Yes, if it is in the wax. I'll tell you everything—I'll read your fate. Now, look at what you've been carrying around. You've got fear (*liak*). And you were frightened by water. Where were you frightened by water so? Try to remember. Where were you frightened by water?

Sarah: Maybe in my childhood?

Orysia: Did a dog frighten you? Did a dog bite you?

Sarah: Yes, once it did.

Orysia: Your partner, your [marriage] fate will not come soon. You won't marry soon.

Sarah: Too bad!

Orysia: You want to marry soon? No, it won't happen soon. Your fate will be good. You'll have a family of three persons. And what are you thinking about a road? Where are you planning to travel?

Sarah: Home, I suppose.

Orysia: The road will be fine. And someone is waiting for you. Who is waiting for you? Sam, John? And you are worried about some papers. Are you waiting for documents, or a letter? What is with those documents? Some problems?

Sarah: Yes, yes.

Orysia: There were some losses, big losses. What did you have? Mama? But there was something else. What did you lose? Was anything stolen? Something like that. You don't recall?

Sarah: No.

Ol'ha: Maybe something unimportant?

Orysia: No, something valuable, or it [the wax] wouldn't show me. There was something, you try to remember. It might have been long ago, but it happened—you lost something. I see some kind of road, there and back.

Ol'ha: Maybe from Kyiv, and back to Kyiv?

Orysia: Your fate? Your fate is good (*faina*). Your heart is a bit damaged.

Sarah: My heart?

Orysia: Does it jab you? Does something jab you near your heart?

Sarah: No.

Orysia: Well, that's good. You can get it checked. Your liver is a bit enlarged on the right side. Just a little, not much. It's like that with everyone, don't worry.

Sarah: What should I do?

Orysia: What can you do? Weren't you ill with something? Hepatitis? Did you have any rash?

Sarah: A rash?

Orysia: Like the chicken pox. There are many illnesses that can cause a rash.

Sarah: No.

Orysia: Maybe radiation caused it to enlarge a bit. Or you ate something that damaged it a little. But you don't feel it yet, because it doesn't reveal itself quickly. Your heart could have suffered when your mother died, from grief. But it doesn't hurt, and thank God it doesn't. But it has a little bit of a problem. That is a weak spot, you must remember that...

Appendix 3: Incantations: Transliterated Texts and Translations*

Incantation 1: Wax ritual incantation (Pavlina Zolota)

1 *Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.*

2 *Isuse, Synu nebesnyi, Maten'ko Nebesna, Sviatyi Otche Mykolaiu,*¹

¹ 1 In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

2 Jesus, Heavenly Son, Heavenly Mother, Saint Nicholas,

*The babky I consulted spoke in local dialects that varied from region to region, and village to village (e.g. the usual *prystrit* becomes *prestret* in Eva's usage). I have transliterated the Ukrainian following their actual speech. Michael Naydan generously assisted me with the transliterations and translations.

- 3 *Sviatyi Mykhaile, Sviatyi Antoniiu, Sviatyi Ivane, Velykyi Khrestyteliu, voda tvoia pomohaie.*
- 4 *Zroby tak, shchob [Slavyk] buv zdorovy i chystyi, iak voda tvoia...*
- 5 *[Vsia molytva "Otche nash".]*
- 6 *Bohorodytse-Divo, raduisia,*
- 7 *obradovanna ty, Mariie,*
- 8 *Hospod' z toboiu,*
- 9 *Blahoslovenna ty, plot' i chrevo tvoie,*
- 10 *iak Isusa rodyla izbavytelia,*
- 11 *vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.*
- 12 *Krynytsia, berehy, korinnia, kaminnia,*
- 13 *omyi [Slavyka] od vsiakoho shchastia, i neshchastia, i terpinnia.*
- 14 *Misiatsiu novyi,*
- 15 *sriblo-zlotyi, dorohyi,*
- 16 *pomahai, ochyshchui vse,*
- 17 *zmyvai, obchyst', obmyi, osviaty,*
- 18 *shchob buv zdorovy, iasnyi, chystyi, iak ty,*
- 19 *z holovy vykhody, z mozky, z cherepa, z chola, z broviv,*
- 20 *z klipok, z ochei, z nosa, z pysku, z ushiv,*
- 21 *z iazyka, z leheniv, z horla, z pechinky, z lezhynky,*
- 22 *z nyrok, z sertsia, z-pid sertsia, z zheludka, z podzheludka,*
- 23 *z rebriv, z-pid rebriv,²*

² 3 Saint Michael, Saint Anton, Saint John the Great Baptist, your water helps.

4 Make it so that [Slavyk] will be healthy and pure as your water.

5 [Recites the entire Lord's Prayer]: Our Father, who art in Heaven...Amen.

6 Hail Mary,

7 full of grace,

8 the Lord is with thee,

9 Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

10 For you bore the Savior.

11 In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

12 Well [of water], shore, roots, and rocks,

13 cleanse [Slavyk] of all manner of happiness and unhappiness, and suffering.

14 New moon,

15 silver-gold moon, dear,

16 help, cleanse all,

17 wash, cleanse, wash, bless,

18 so he will be as healthy, as bright, and pure as you,

19 go out from the head, from the brain, the skull, the forehead, the brows,

20 the eyelids, the eyes, the nose, the face, the ears,

21 the tongue, the lungs, the throat, the liver, illness,

22 the kidneys, the heart, from under the heart, from the stomach, from under the stomach,

23 the ribs, from under the ribs,

24 *z pal'tsiv, z sustaviv, z liktiv, z kolin, z pazuriv vykhody*
 25 *na hory, na skeli idy,*
 26 *vsi strakhy, vsi nervy, vsiu khvorobu, vsi neshchastia, vse bezsonnia posylaiu,*
 27 *Maten'ko Nebesna, Ty vsim pomahaesh,*
 28 *mozhe, i [Slavyku] pomozhesh, shchob vin buv zdorovy i chystyi,*
 29 *iak voda tvoia zdorova,*
 30 *Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.³*

Incantation 2: Incantation used by Paraskovia Moroz to treat any illness or problem

1 *Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin' (3 razy).*
 2 *Dozvol'te, Prechysta Divo Mariie,*
 3 *moiemu sertsiu s Vamy hovoryty*
 4 *i [Sari] zdorov'iachka uprosyty,*
 5 *shchob ii bile tilo, zhovti kosti,*
 6 *chervona krov, syni zhyly*
 7 *tsila ii budova*
 8 *buly zdorovymy vid vsiakoi boli,*
 9 *vsiakoi nemochi,*
 10 *vsiakych strakhiv, vsiakych klopotiv,*
 11 *vid vs'oho zloho sokhranyty,*
 12 *na mnoha lita poblahoslovyty.⁴*

³ 24 from the fingers, the joints, the elbows, the knees, go out from the nails
 25 go to the mountains, the cliffs,
 26 all the fears, all the nerves, all the illnesses, all the unhappiness, I send all the sleeplessness,
 27 Heavenly Mother, You help everyone,
 28 maybe you will help [Slavyk], so he will be healthy and clean
 29 like your healthy water,
 30 in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

⁴ 1 In the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen (repeats three times).
 2 Allow, Immaculate Virgin Mary
 3 My heart to speak with You
 4 and to beseech [Sarah's] health,
 5 that her white body, yellow bones,
 6 red blood, blue veins,
 7 her entire body
 8 would be healthy from all pain,
 9 all infirmity,
 10 all fear, all troubles,
 11 from all evil protect her,
 12 bless her for many years.

- 13 *Isuse, Synu Bozhyi,*
 14 *dozvol'te moiemu sertsiu z Vamy hovoryty*
 15 *i [Sari] zdorov'iachka uprosyty,*
 16 *shchob ii bile tilo, zhovti kosti,*
 17 *chervona krov, syni zhyly,*
 18 *tsila ii budova*
 19 *buly zdorovymy vid vsiakoi boli,*
 20 *vsyakoi nemochi,*
 21 *vsiakykh strakhiv, vsiakykh klopotiv,*
 22 *vid vs'oho zloho sokhranyty,*
 23 *na mnoha lita poblahoslovyty.*
 24 *Nad khmaramy sydila chorna pani prostovolosa.*
 25 *De ty, skusa, vzialasia,*
 26 *chy ty z vitru,*
 27 *chy ty z pohanoho snu,*
 28 *chy ty z navchannia,⁵*
-

- ⁵ 13 Jesus, Son of God,
 14 allow my heart to speak with You
 15 and to beseech [Sarah's] health,
 16 that her white body, yellow bones,
 17 red blood and blue veins,
 18 her entire being
 19 would be healthy from all pain,
 20 all infirmity,
 21 all fear, all troubles,
 22 from all evil protect her,
 23 bless her for many years.*
 24 On the clouds sat a black lady, bareheaded.**
 25 Where have you, good-for-nothing, come from?
 26 From the wind,
 27 or from bad dreams,***
 28 or from learning,

* In another version of this prayer, Paraskovia repeated this section a third time, evoking aid from Saint John the Baptist, all twelve apostles, Saints Nicholas and Elijah, and the martyrs Dmytro, Ol'ha, Elizaveta and Barbara.

** In Ukrainian villages, it is customary for a woman to have her hair under a scarf or in a braid, wrapped around her head. Here, the fact that the "black lady" is bareheaded probably indicates that she is a witch. Later Paraskovia calls her "*skusa*," a term used to avoid pronouncing the word "*chort*" (devil).

*** In another version of this incantation, Paraskovia added here, "Or from a bad man, or a bad woman, or from bad creatures?" She also added, "Or from work, or colds?"

29 *chy ty z zavisty,*
 30 *chy ty z strakhy?*
 31 *Tut tobi ne buvaty,*
 32 *tut tobi ne prezentuvaty,*
 33 *tut tobi ne v'ialyty,*
 34 *tut tobi ne sushyty.*
 35 *Ia tobi, skusa, dam try roboty:*
 36 *odnu robotu—vodu perelyvai,*
 37 *druhu robotu—kaminniam hudy,*
 38 *tretiu robotu—vitramy shumy,*
 39 *ia tobi, skuso, dam vodytsiu—vmyisia,*
 40 *rushnychok—vtrysia,*
 41 *trostovu palochku—pidoprysia—zvidsy vyberysia.*
 42 *Idy sobi, de psy ne havkaiut',*
 43 *de kury ne spivaiut',*
 44 *de vrazhi vitry huliaiut',*
 45 *[Sarochku] zdoroven'ku, chysten'ku lyshy,*
 46 *iak ii maty na svit porodyla.*
 47 *Popid nebesa ikhav svoim konem Illia,*
 48 *ishla Bozhaia Maty,*
 49 *kuda ty, choloviche, idesh?*⁶

⁶ 29 or from envy,
 30 or from fear?
 31 Here you mustn't show yourself,
 32 here you mustn't dwell,
 33 here you mustn't dry it,
 34 here you mustn't dry it out.
 35 You good-for-nothing, I'll give you three tasks:
 36 One task—pour water,
 37 the second task—make the rocks hum,
 38 the third task—rustle the wind,
 39 you good-for-nothing, I'll give you water—wash with it,
 40 a towel—dry off with it,
 41 a cane walking stick—lean on it—get out of here.
 42 Go where dogs don't bark,
 43 where chickens don't sing,
 44 where enemy winds dance,
 45 let [Sarah] be healthy, pure
 46 as when her mother bore her.
 47 Beneath the heavens Ilia rode his horse,
 48 the Virgin Mary was walking,
 49 where are you, young man, going?

50 *id' na im'ia [Sarochku] ozdorovliaty*
 51 *vid nei vs'o zlo vidibraty,*
 52 *na ii ne pustyty,*
 53 *a ii ozdorovyty,*
 54 *na mnohii lita poblahoslovyty,*
 55 *roztrykhnyisia ielei na vsi 3 chasti,*
 56 *roztrykhnyisia strakh i vs'o zlo na vsi 3 chasti,*
 57 *a [Sarochka] ozdorovlena na mnohi i mnohi lita*
 58 *proslavyty ii i zhyty, i zhyty.*
 59 *[Vo imia Ottsia i Syna, i Sviatoho Dukha, amin'.*
 60 *Boh-Otets', Boh-Syn, Boh-Dukh Sviatyi (3 razy),*
 61 *neporochne sertse Marii,*
 62 *otche Nikolaiu,*
 63 *dopomozhy [Sarochtsi] v sim'i ii,*
 64 *v navchanniu, v dorozi, vdoma,*
 65 *khai shchaslyva bude mnohiie lita] (3 razy).⁷*

Incantation 3: To remove fear (Eva)

1 *Hospodu Bohu pomoliusia,*
 2 *Prechystoi Bozhoi Materi pokloniusia.*
 3 *Prishla Prechysta Bozha Maty do [Parasky]⁸*

⁷ 50 Go to make [Sarah's] name healthy,
 51 take all evil away from her,
 52 don't release it upon her,
 53 and make her healthy,
 54 for many years bless her,
 55 shake/shatter fir trees (?) into all three parts,
 56 shake/shatter fear and all evil into all three parts,
 57 and healthy [Sarah] for many, many years
 58 bless her to live, and live.
 59 [In the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.
 60 God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit (3 times),
 61 sacred heart of Mary,
 62 father Nicholas,
 63 help [Sarah] in her family,
 64 in study, in travel, at home,
 65 may she be happy for many years] (3 times).

⁸ 1 To the Lord God I pray,
 2 to the Heavenly Mother of God I bow.
 3 The Heavenly Mother of God came to [Paraska]

- 4 *prestret sheptat'.*
- 5 *Prestret-prestrashchyshe,*
- 6 *uroky vrochyshe,*
- 7 *behlo vovchyshe cherez pans'ke olenyshe,*
- 8 *selo na popelyshe.*
- 9 *Kudy vy idete, pannochky,*
- 10 *kudy vy idete?*
- 11 *Idem do [Parasky] rozhd'onoï, khreshchonoï*
- 12 *prestret uroky vyhovoriat'.*
- 13 *A vy, pannochky, vernit'sia,*
- 14 *prestret uroky mynet'sia.*⁹

Incantation 4: To remove fear (Eva)

- 1 *Hospodu Bohu pomolusia,*
- 2 *Prechystoi Bozhoi Materi poklonusia.*
- 3 *Prishla Prechysta Bozha Maty*
- 4 *do [Nadi] khreshchenoi, rozhd'onoï*
- 5 *prestret sheptat'.*
- 6 *Prestret-prestrashchyshe,*
- 7 *uroky vrochyshe,*
- 8 *behlo vovchyshe cherez pans'ke olenyshe,*¹⁰

⁹ 4 to whisper away the fear.
 5 Fear, great fear,
 6 evil eye, great evil eye,
 7 a little wolf ran across the master's deer-filled land,
 8 and sat on the ashes.
 9 Where are you going, girls,
 10 where are you going?
 11 We're going to [Paraska] the born, the christened,
 12 to speak away the evil eye.
 13 And you, girls, return,
 14 the fear and the evil eye will pass.

¹⁰ 1 To the Lord God I pray,
 2 to the Heavenly Mother of God I bow.
 3 The Heavenly Mother of God came
 4 to [Nadia] the christened, the born
 5 to whisper [away] the fear.
 6 Fear, big fear,
 7 evil eye, big evil eye,
 8 a little wolf ran across the master's deer-filled land,

- 9 *silo na popelyshche.*
 10 *A vy, pannochky, vernit'sia,*
 11 *prestret uroky mynit'sia.*
 12 *Ie v materi try dochky—*
 13 *odna lozhku myie,*
 14 *druha plattia kachaie,*
 15 *tretia prestret odvertaie.*¹¹

Incantation 5: Said while “spinning” an egg to remove “fear” (*liak*) (Eva)

- 1 *Hospodu Bohu pomoliusia,*
 2 *Prechystoi Bozhoi Materi pokloniusia.*
 3 *Prishla Prechysta Bozha Maty*
 4 *do [Nadi] liaku sheptaty.*
 5 *Sobachyi, kotiachyi,*
 6 *tovariachyi, khlobochyi, perebochyi,*
 7 *koly ia tebe ne znala*
 8 *i ne vyhovarala,*
 9 *teper ia tebe znaiu*
 10 *i vyhovoraiu,*
 11 *z chervonoi krovy, z zhovtoho tyla,*
 12 *z zhovtoi kosti, z rumianoho lytsia.*¹²

- ¹¹9 and sat on the ashes.
 10 And you, girls, return,
 11 the fear and the evil eye will pass.
 12 The mother has three daughters—
 13 one is washing a spoon
 14 the second is washing a dress,
 15 the third is turning away the evil eye.

- ¹² 1 To the Lord God I pray,
 2 to the Heavenly Mother of God I bow.
 3 The Heavenly Mother of God came
 4 to [Nadia] to whisper [away] fear.
 5 Canine, feline,
 6 bovine, ???, ???,
 7 When I did not know you
 8 I did not speak you away,
 9 Now I know you
 10 And speak you away,
 11 from the red blood, from the yellow body,
 12 from the yellow bones, from the rosy face.

Incantation 6: To treat a hernia (Eva)

1 *Zolotnychku, zolotnychku,*
 2 *dobryi cholovechku,*
 3 *koly ia tebe ne znala*
 4 *i ne vyhovorala,*
 5 *teper ia tebe znaiu*
 6 *i vyhovoraiu,*
 7 *na zoloty i stol'chik siad',*
 8 *na svoe mestechko siad'.*¹³

¹³ 1 Hernia [little gold one], hernia [little gold one],
 2 dear man,
 3 when I did not know you
 4 I did not speak you away,
 5 now I know you
 6 and speak you away,
 7 sit on a golden chair,
 8 sit down in your place.



Paraskovia Moroz in her home, with folk icons and her herbal and other natural remedies



Wreaths of dried herbs, blessed by a priest, and used for herbal teas and medicines



Orysia Popovs'ka preparing to interpret the shapes in the wax